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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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Property Address:	<b>1214-1216 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Mount Vernon Square Historic District</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
		<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	<b>July 26, 2012</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>#12-511</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Brendan Meyer</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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Owner Sahr Bockai seeks concept approval for construction of two new brick flats, 3-1/2 stories tall, at the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Ridge Streets in the Mount Vernon Square Historic District. The board approved a larger concept plan for this owner and site in October 2010 that included an addition to the rear of the existing 2-story brick commercial/apartment buildings at 1214-1216 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The owner now seeks review of a new concept design only for new flat buildings proposed for the vacant lots immediately at the corner (lots 153 and 154). Plans were prepared by Philip Bentley, architectural designer.

**Property Description and Context**

This block of 4<sup>th</sup> Street consists of a variety of building types with no dominant type, including wood frame and brick rowhouses from 1850 through 1900, early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial buildings, and a row of recently-completed projecting-bay rowhouses.

On the site is a rock-face, concrete-block garage along Ridge Street that is the remnant of a coal yard operation dating to 1930. Its large corner office was demolished many years ago, leaving the standing two garage bays disconnected from its historic context and lacking integrity due to its condition. In October 2012, the Board qualified the structure as non-contributing and approved its demolition as part of the previous concept.

**Proposal**

The new concept plan is for two, 2-unit buildings, composed as a single symmetrical building. The front façade would face 4<sup>th</sup> Street and consist of three bays. The dominant feature of the design is a central bay is arranged from cast stone spandrel panels and trim, tall casement windows, glass block, and entrance doors. A medium size masonry stoop serves the main entrance which is above grade on top of a raised basement. On either side of this central feature are banks of double hung six-over-one windows ganged together in groups of three, separated by mullions and capped by soldier-course brick headers.

The side elevation along Ridge is unadorned and repeats the same fenestration rhythm of ganged double-hung windows from the front. At the west end of the façade, the height of the building steps down one story.

## **Evaluation**

The current proposal, at 35 feet tall and 59 feet deep, is generally the same overall dimensions of the previously approved concept design which was 38 feet tall and 52 feet deep.

The proposed concept takes the form of pre-war, small apartment building found in many neighborhoods in the city. It is not out of character for this historic district, especially adjacent to the existing 1930s simple brick commercial/apartment building already on the site. A fundamental organizing principal of apartments of this type is for the shared vertical circulation to be immediately behind the main entrance, in this way eliminating the need for a large corridor through the building. Multi-story stairs immediately behind front entrances were often expressed uniquely on the façade to give prominence to entrances. This tended to centralize ornament in one location on an otherwise simple façade. Central elements sometimes extended past the parapet and created a distinguished roofline, but not always or consistently.

The design is a modern version of this historic form striking the right chords as far as its use of a special material (cast stone and glass block) and special windows (slightly larger and offset from the alignment of the regular windows). The central entrance stands apart, juxtaposed with the regular double-hung windows, which is again typical of this historic form.

The front steps being solid masonry, rather than an open steel design, are also integral to matching the historic form. While incorporating planters within the masonry form is not unexpected, as the design gets finalized, attention should be given to the basement entry steps to make sure they remain secondary to the main entrance and do not bleed out or require excessive screening.

## **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board:*

- *find the design concept to be compatible with the character of the historic district and,*
- *delegate final approval to staff.*